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AN ORATION

DELIVERED AT THE ACADEMY OF MUSIC,
PHILADELPHIA, FEBRUARY 22, 1897

BY

M. RUSSELL THAYER,
A.M., LL.D.

BY REQUEST OF THE PROVOST AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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Press of
Maurice H. Power
Philadelphia

ORATION

The whole Earth is the monument of illustrious men. They are the words of Pericles, in his funeral speech over the Athenians who fell in battle for Athens at Samos. In the same strain Thucydides, writing of the great dramatic poet Euripides—the rival of Sophacles—said, All Greece is the monument of Euripides—although his home was in Athens and his bones rest in Macedon. There are passages in the works of antiquity, as a great writer of our own time has said, which to our ears and minds have the sound and depth of inspiration. Athens and Pericles are no more. The little town that lies at the foot of the Acropolis is but a death-mask of the metropolis of ancient Greece. The splendor of that heroic rule of Pericles is but a far off after-glow from the days of Hellenic glory. The Parthenon, plundered alike by nations and individuals, is but a crumbled ruin. The noble works of Phydias have long since turned to dust. A Varangian Prince from a northern land unknown to the Greeks, sits now where Pericles sat, and Attica, the mother of the arts, of poetry, philosophy and eloquence, survives only in the undaunted courage, which belongs by

nature to the Argive race, which no mutations of time, no decree of destiny, no misfortunes, and no Turkish tyranny have been able to quench. Yet the pregnant saying of Pericles and Thucydides still remains, and will forever remain, the grand expression of a great truth. The monument of which they spoke is built of the great deeds of great men enshrined in the memory of all mankind. It commemorates the lives of those immortal men whose virtues and whose genius were great enough and strong enough to resist the ravages of time, and whose fame, like the sun in heaven, illumines all lands. In this great band no name is more securely enrolled than that of him whose natal day we celebrate to-day—the champion of our struggling infancy—the great soldier of the war of independence—the founder of our government, its first Chief Magistrate and greatest citizen—George Washington.

We have come to-day to read again the lesson of this great man's life, to look again upon the familiar picture of our greatest hero, and to hold it aloft as a banner before the eyes of the youth of this University, founded and cherished by the great men who were his friends and companions, to stimulate them to virtuous and unselfish lives, and to kindle afresh the ardor of their affection, their reverence, and their veneration. And what place more appropriate than this, the central point of his

great public career, the birth-place of the revolution, the cradle of the Constitution, the seat of Government under that Constitution for ten years when in its uncertain infancy, the home of the first and the second Continental Congress, the place in which he received his great commission, in which he presided for four months over the convention which framed the Constitution, and which was his official residence for more than six years as the first President of the United States—a city in which it may be truly said his public career began and ended.

Nor was it unfamiliar to him in earlier days, for hither he came and tarried and was entertained in 1756, at the age of twenty-four, in the glory of his early youth, twenty years before the declaration of independence—crowned even then by the fame he had won as a Virginia soldier in the French and Indian border wars, and upon the fatal field where Braddock fell and the flower of his army so miserably perished. His behavior in that unfortunate campaign had attracted the attention of all the colonies, from Massachusetts to Georgia. Appointed an aid-de-camp to the unfortunate British general he had borne himself with the most signal intrepidity and courage on that dreadful day of slaughter. Having three horses shot under him and his clothes riddled with bullets, he had yet escaped uninjured from the carnage. He had read

the funeral service of the church over the wilderness grave of his brave, but unfortunate commander, and had then, with his shattered Virginia troops, safely covered the retreat of what remained of that once admirable but ruined army. In the year following this great disaster, being still in the field, and being then Adjutant-General of the Virginia troops, a vexatious quarrel had arisen out of the pretensions of one Dagworthy, a captain of Maryland militia, to outrank him on account of his having once held a King's Commission. He resolved to settle once for all, all such questions of relative rank between the King's officers and those of the Virginia militia, by an appeal to the commander of the forces in the colonies. Accordingly, here he was at Philadelphia, in the winter of 1756, upon his journey of five hundred miles on horseback, in the dead of winter, to General Shirley, at Boston, accompanied by Captain Stewart, of the Virginia lighthorse—the officer who had so faithfully cared for General Braddock in his last moments, and by another army comrade, Captain Mercer, of Virginia. The three distinguished officers, with their gay outfit and little retinue of liveried servants, must have attracted no little attention as they clattered down Market street on that cold February day on their way to their quarters. But he must not go upon such an errand without presenting

himself in proper form. No sloven he to rush into the presence of the Commander of the King's forces in America in unceremonious fashion or unbecoming garb. What his make-up and equipment were we know pretty well from a letter he had previously sent to London ordering a proper outfit, "two complete livery suits for servants, with a spare cloak. All other necessary trimmings for two suits more. I would have you choose the livery by our arms, only as the field of the arms is white, I think the clothes had better not be quite so, but nearly like the enclosed. The trimmings and facings of scarlet, and a scarlet waistcoat. If livery lace is not quite disused I should be glad to have the cloaks laced. I like that fashion best. And two silver-laced hats for the above servants. One set of horse furniture with livery lace, with the Washington crest on the housings, etc.; the cloak to be of the same piece and color of the clothes. Three gold and scarlet sword knots. Three silver and blue ditto. One fashionable gold-laced hat." This city was then small, and the arrival of three young officers so bravely dight, who had acquitted themselves with so much honor in the recent disastrous battle, must have made them objects of interest and enthusiasm. They traveled in true Virginia style, on horseback attended by their black servants in livery. If you would give the rein to fancy and conjure from the past the figure of the

great Chief, at this youthful stage of his career, you may read the description given of him by one of the comrades who accompanied him: "He may be described, wrote Captain George Mercer, "as being as straight as an Indian, measuring six feet two inches in his stockings and weighing 175 pounds. His bones and joints are large, as are his feet and hands. He is wide shouldered, but has not a deep or round chest, but is broad across the hips, and has long legs and arms. His head is well shaped, not large, but gracefully poised on a superb neck, a large and straight rather than prominent nose, blue-grey penetrating eyes which are widely separated and overhung by a heavy brow. His face is long rather than broad, with high round cheek-bones and terminates in a good firm chin. He has a clear, though rather a colorless pale skin which burns with the sun, a pleasing, benevolent, though commanding countenance, and dark brown hair which he wears in a cue. His mouth is large and generally firmly closed. His features are regular and placid, though expressive of deep feeling when moved by emotion. In conversation he looks you full in the face, is deliberate, deferential and engaging. His voice is agreeable rather than strong. His demeanor at all times composed and dignified. His movements and gestures are graceful, his walk majestic, and he is a splendid horseman." I have nowhere seen so particular a

description of him at this period as that given by Captain Mercer. The mission to General Shirley was successful in all respects but one. They did not get the commissions from the king which they coveted. And so he went back to his camp at Winchester to join, a little later, General Forbes in the renewed and now successful campaign against Fort Du Quesne, in the same summer in which the drums were beating before Louisburg for the victorious assault of General Amherst. In the succeeding year the surrender of Niagara to General Johnson effectually cut the communications of the French between Canada and Louisiana, and with the glorious victory of Wolfe at Quebec fell forever the French power in America. Coincident almost with these great events which brought with them the blessings of peace, Washington was married to Martha Custis on the 6th of January, 1759, and the war being over was at liberty to retire to his beautiful domain at Mount Vernon, to enjoy the life of a great planter, to apply himself to the management of his estates and the duties of a country gentleman, including all its business, its amenities, and its country sports. Chief among these was the following of the fox-hounds, accompanied by his early friend and patron, Lord Fairfax and his cousin William—the former, at the age of fifty, lately came out of old England to dwell in the Virginia forests, a gentleman of fine tastes

and education, in his youth the companion of Addison and Steele, or perchance by his close friend and neighbor, George Mason, living hard by at Gunston Hall, or by friends from Alexandria or from the Northern Neck, as they called the rich, alluvial region between the Potomac and the Rappahannock.

Here drops the curtain at the close of what may be called the first act of his eventful life—his youth—for at the time of his marriage he was in his twenty-seventh year and Martha Curtis was of the same age. If you would look behind the curtain, you would find him living the life of a Virginia gentleman and great landholder, very busy in the cultivation and management of his farms, overseeing his overseers, shipping his flour and tobacco to old England and the West Indies, looking after his servants and taking an active part in all that went on in the country side, fond of dancing, fond of cards, fond of the theatre, fond of fox-hunting, and particularly fond of horse-racing, coming to enjoy it frequently to Annapolis and to the jockey club races at Philadelphia, fond of society as it was at that period, and in old Virginia, where it was no disparagement to a gentleman to be drunk occasionally after dinner, but never himself having been known upon any occasion to be in that condition. But the contract which he made with Philip

Barter, his gardener, is still extant, reproduced in Professor Wilson's charming volume lately published, in which he agreed that "if he would serve him faithfully as gardener and keep sober at all other times, he would allow him four dollars at Christmas with which to be drunk four days and four nights, two dollars at Easter for the same purpose, two dollars at Whitsuntide to be drunk for two days, a dram in the morning and a drink of grog at dinner, at noon"—a contract drawn up in proper form and duly signed and witnessed.

These must have been the Elysian days of his life, when he lived, the lord of his own broad acres, engaged in the most congenial employments, in the midst of the friends whom he most loved. It endured for fifteen years, from his wedding day in 1759 to the first Continental Congress of 1774 when a broader life began to open before him and graver duties and greater anxieties and trials began to loom above his horizon. They must have been fifteen years of unalloyed happiness, varied with occasional attendance upon the house of burgesses at Williamsburg—an experience fraught with the most important results, for there he found for companions Richard Henry Lee, Peyton Randolph, Patrick Henry, Richard Bland, Edmund Pendleton, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Harrison and other great leaders and champions of colonial rights, who began there to discuss in calm and determined, but

still loyal tones, the hostile legislation directed against them in England. It was to Washington a period of education in political affairs and questions of government. The time would soon be at hand which would end his dream of happiness at Mount Vernon, when his life would be filled with other employments, severer tasks, greater trials and more solemn responsibilities. For Lord North's administration had come in, and with the coming of Lord Dunmore into Virginia, the skies would soon darken and every portent point to a coming storm. And so it happened that by and by the curtain rose upon the second act in the life of our great chief when he was appointed by the Virginia Convention a delegate to the Continental Congress which assembled at Carpenter's Hall in Philadelphia on September 5, 1774. A silent man always, he was a silent member of that important body during the seven weeks of its conference. But to one of his colleagues Patrick Henry said, even then: "If you speak of solid information and sound judgment, Colonel Washington is unquestionably the greatest man on that floor." When, on the 10th of May in the following year he came to the second Congress of 1775, whether influenced by some instinctive prescience of coming events, or whether he desired only to appear in the dress of the profession to which he belonged, he came hither in the uniform of a Colonel of Virginia

militia. It is not surprising that he should have done so, for at that moment every one could see that the great crisis of affairs had come, that fate, even the fate of empire, stood already knocking at the door. Massachusetts proclaimed in rebellion, the ports of New England closed, her fishermen driven from the banks, fleets riding at anchor on her shores, Boston garrisoned by ten thousand soldiers. Massachussets already armed, the Virginia militia everywhere being drilled, her royal governor, Lord Dunmore already fled to his ships. All the Colonies were up and getting ready, for not only had the signal for hostilities been given but the war itself was begun. Three weeks before the Congress had assembled the muskets of the minute-men had blazed at Lexington, three hundred British soldiers slain, General Howe besieged in Boston by sixteen thousand provincial militia. Two weeks later had come Ticonderoga and Crown Point. Two days before Washington's commission as commander-in-chief was signed had been fought the battle of Bunker's Hill, where General Howe's attacking party of three thousand had lost one thousand of its number in dislodging seventeen hundred militia-men from its crest.

It is therefore not to be wondered at that Washington came as a delegate to the Congress of 1775, clad in the uniform of his provincial rank, ready to take his place, wherever it might be, to aid in the

defence of his country. He had long since been quick to see the inevitable result of the parliamentary legislation against the colonies, and foreseeing that the issue raised could ultimately be decided only by a resort to arms, had cast in his lot with the party in Virginia which had determined to resist the tyranny which had begun. Long before Congress had assembled he had written "it is my full intention to devote my life and fortune to the cause we are engaged in, if needful." When on June 15, 1775, John Adams had risen and said he "had but one gentleman in his mind for the supreme command—a gentleman well-known to us all, whose skill and experience as an officer, whose independent fortune, great talents and excellent character would command the approbation of all America" Washington's modesty had been such that before the words were finished, perceiving what was coming, he had withdrawn from the hall. When he returned he declared, in accepting the position to which he had been called, "I beg it may be remembered by every gentleman in this room, that I this day declare, with the utmost sincerity, I do not think myself equal to the command I am honored with." And to Mrs. Washington he wrote, "You may believe me, my dear Patsey, when I assure you in the most solemn manner that so far from seeking this appointment I have used every effort in my power to avoid it, not only from my unwil-

lingness to part with you and the family, but from a consciousness of its being a trust too great for my capacity, but as it has been a kind of destiny that has thrown me upon this service, I shall hope that my undertaking it, is designed to answer some good purpose. It was utterly out of my power to refuse this appointment without exposing my character to such censures as would have reflected dishonor upon myself and given pain to my friends."

His commission being signed on the 19th of June, he was in the saddle on the 21st, riding over the same old road he had travelled in his youth nineteen years before on his visit to Governor Shirley to settle the question of his relative rank. And now, as he rides away over the country roads to Cambridge, and people come out of their towns to meet him, and farmers and their wives and children, leaving their houses and their work in the fields, run to the road-side to get a glimpse of him as he passes and follow him with benedictions and prayers for his protection, let us pause for a moment to contemplate this commanding figure, as under the great Cambridge elm he draws his sword and assumes the command of the army. He is now forty-three years of age—a figure tall, erect, noble in its bearing, his features expressive of benignity and yet of a reserve and dignity remarked by all who approached him—a serious countenance, which one described as having a

melancholy cast, another, as a soberness which just stopped short of sadness, with light grey eyes which the Prince de Broglie described as "pensive, but with an expression, benevolent, noble and self-possesed;" having, by nature, a hot temper of his own but under a strong control, except when under the influence of the greatest provocation it burst its bounds and blazed with incandescent heat—as at Lee's retreat at Monmouth, and in later years in the scene at the cabinet meeting mentioned by Jefferson, when enraged beyond endurance by the vile libels of Frenan, the publisher of the "Gazette." Silas Deane said of him in 1775 that "although forty-three, he had a very young look, with an easy soldier-like air and gesture." He was possessed of great physical strength. He had climbed in his youth the precipitous sides of the Natural Bridge, and thrown a stone across the Rappahannock at Fredericksburg, and one into the Hudson from the summit of the Palisades. His bodily vigor and endurance were remarkable. In 1755 he had written of himself, "For my own part, I can answer I have a constitution hardy enough to encounter and undergo the most severe trials," a hardiness of constitution which stood him in good stead on many a rough experience afterwards. In the retreat from Brooklyn he was hardly out of the saddle for forty-eight hours. Between the 13th and 19th of June, 1777, he was almost constantly

on horseback. He frequently slept at night in the open on a blanket. The first night of the siege at Yorktown he slept under a mulberry tree, with its root for a pillow. His personal courage was one of his most conspicuous qualities. It often rose to heights of heroic daring, evincing sometimes a rash disregard of all considerations of personal safety, as, for example, when on the last march to Fort Du Quesne his own detachment of troops and another under Colonel George Mercer, of the Virginia line, having accidentally encountered each other in the dusk, and mistaking each other for enemies, commenced a deadly fire upon one another, which, as is graphically related by Professor Wilson, "was only checked because Washington, rushing between their lines, even while their pieces blazed, cried his hot commands to stop, and struck up the smoking muzzles with his sword." His escape from death, as before at Braddock's field, Great Meadows, Fort Necessity, and afterwards on many battle-fields, seemed almost miraculous. Much of this intrepid courage and bodily vigor was doubtless born of the trials and adventures of his early years, the hardships and dangers, the suffering and exposure he underwent in the frontier wilderness, as a surveyor of wild lands for Lord Fairfax, and afterwards in the French and Indian wars. In his youth almost his whole life had been lived in the open, much of

it amid the wildest and most rugged scenes, and amid constant perils, privations and alarms, an experience which Lord Byron, no doubt, had in his mind when, in his pilgrimage of Childe Harold he wrote of

> "Minds nourished in the wilds—
> Deep in the unpruned forest, midst the roar
> Of cataracts, where nursing nature smiled
> On infant Washington."

Great courage goes as a rule with great firmness of purpose, great sincerity and great magnanimity of character. And these were precisely the qualities which so strongly endeared him to the army.

It is no part of my present purpose, nor would the ceremonies of the present occasion permit me to detain you, by following in minute detail the operations of that army from Dorchester Heights to Yorktown. It is a story familiar to all Americans—a story of more than six years of hardship, heroic endurance, and hard fighting. Nevertheless, no one in touching upon that portion of the life of Washington which belongs to his military career, can with propriety omit some reference to the chief landmarks of that career, each of which constitutes an important epoch in the history of the struggle for independence.

Chief among these were the compulsory evacuation of Boston by the enemy: the disastrous

encounter on Long Island; the masterly retreat of a broken and dispirited army to White Plains and across the Delaware, with a formidable pursuit so close that the rear of the army was often within sight and within shot of the enemy's—that army reduced now by casualties, captures of prisoners and expiration of enlistments to three thousand men, but soon reinforced by the arrival of Sullivan's force, to seven thousand. Then, when hope was failing, and all hearts were despondent, came, like lightning leaping from the clouds, the attack upon Trenton. It was 3 o'clock of Christmas night, 1776, when Washington crossed the Delaware and attacked the enemy at 8 o'clock in the morning, with the result of forty of the enemy killed and wounded and a thousand prisoners—a stroke so masterly and a success so brilliant that Frederick the Great exclaimed, when he heard of it, "America is lost to England!" Trenton was swiftly followed by Princeton, where Washington, though Cornwallis was at his heels, fell again upon the enemy with such a decisive rout, that it is related of him that, rising in his stirups, while they pursued, he gave the view halloo and cried to his aids, "An old fashioned Virginia fox hunt, gentlemen!" Then away to Morristown where, safely entrenched in the mountains of New Jersey, against superior numbers, he found an impregnable shelter for his exhausted army. Then, there is a shifting of

the scene, General Howe, having his eye on Philadelphia, the capital of the insurgent Colonies and the seat of Congress, sailed away from New York, with his 18,000 men, to the Chesapeake, and landing his army at the head of Elk, marched upon the city. He took it, but he was not to take it without a struggle. When he reached the fords of Brandywine he found Washington upon the opposite bank ready to oppose his progress, but his main body, crossing at an unguarded ford above, fell upon Sullivan's flank and the day was lost, one of its painful incidents being the severe wounding of Lafayette. The roar of the battle had been distinctly heard in Philadelphia, where its result was awaited amid the most intense excitement. One more brave effort to save the city miscarried, not through any fault of Washington, however, for the battle of Germantown was one of the best planned battles of the war, and only failed of success by reason of circumstances, which no skill could control and no courage could surmount. It was a repulse, with the loss of twelve hundred killed, wounded, and missing. But so well conceived was the plan and so gallant was the effort, that Washington and his army received, nevertheless, the thanks of Congress. The loss of the battle of Germantown was, however, in a measure compensated by the great news which came from the North immediately afterwards on the 17th of October, announcing

the defeat of Burgoyne by the swarming farmers of the North, and his surrender at Saratoga. After that, the retreat of Washington to Whitemarsh and the terrible winter at Valley Forge, freezing and starving, starving and freezing, the daily variety being a drill out in the snow in the morning by Steuben, and a foraging party in the afternoon for provisions. It was a dark time then in the fortunes of the war, with a diminished and half-starved army cantoned in their bleak huts, and an impotent Congress listening without response to the appeals of its undaunted Chief for succor. But behind the wintry clouds of Valley Forge the spring was soon to break, and with its returning blossoms came the French alliance and a French fleet, Clinton's evacuation of Philadelphia, with his eleven thousand men, and Washington's hot pursuit with an army now superior to his own. No holiday march had the enemy to New York, in that summer of our Lord, 1778. It was not quite but almost a double quick to reach their ships at Sandy Hook, but ere they arrived there they were stuck and stuck hard at Monmouth, where the personal intrepidity of Washington turned a cowardly retreat into a brilliant victory, the enemy leaving three hundred dead upon the field from which they were driven. Safe at last in their ships they betook themselves again to their intrenchments at New York, while Washington, returning

to Middlebrook watched in suspense for their next move. And thus it happened that after two years of manœuvring and marching and fighting, both armies had came back to the same relative positions which they occupied at the close of 1776.

In 1779 there was hard fighting at the south as well as at the north. Carolina and Georgia were at the feet of the enemy after the fall of Savannah, while Clinton's forces ravaged at leisure the coasts of New England—New Haven plundered—East Haven, Fairfield, Norwalk, and other towns reduced to heaps of ashes. The one glorious achievement of the year, and one of the most brilliant of the whole war was the assault and recapture of Stony Point by our own fearless and intrepid soldier, General Wayne. Stony Point was carried at midnight, with unloaded muskets, and at the point of the bayonet. Wayne, who led the attacking party on the night in person, being struck in the head by a bullet, on reaching the inner *abattis*, and supposing the wound to be mortal, said to the aid-de-camp, who supported him as he fell, "Carry me into the fort, and let me die at the head of my column." Washington well knew what officer to select for so hazardous and perilous a duty. Mr. Irving is authority for the statement that when asked by Washington if he would undertake to lead the storming party he had replied, "General, I

will storm hell if you will only plan it." The undaunted valor which he displayed there, he exhibited on many another stricken field. It was chiefly owing to his courage and capacity that at a later day Georgia was rescued from the grasp the enemy. It was Washington's confidence in his courage and capacity which led him at a subsequent period to appoint him to the command of the force with which he succeeded in a single campaign in subduing and subjugating the savage Indian tribes upon our Western border after Harmer and St. Clair had signally failed in similar attempts. Somewhat neglected amid the blaze of other great reputations in histories of the war written in other localities, it has been left for a distinguished alumnus of this university—a former Provost, Dr. Charles J. Stillé—to write the true record of the life of Pennsylvania's great soldier, Anthony Wayne, and to place him on that pedestal of fame on which he properly belongs in every history of the War of the Revolution.

The cloud of battle which drifted away to the southward in the spring of 1780 burst in disaster at Camden, where Gates's defeat resulted in a rout with the loss of a thousand men, besides artillery, ammunition, wagons and baggage. A reverse in some degree cancelled by the exploits of Sumpter and Marion, and the patriot victory won two

months later at King's Mountain, where the enemy lost three hundred in killed and wounded with eight hundred prisoners of war. But it was not until Congress had removed Gates and substituted Washington's great lieutenant, Greene, in his place, that affairs in the south began to assume a more permanent aspect of improvement. The disgrace of Camden was soon wiped out by the glorious battle of the Cowpens. Then began that marching and countermarching of Greene and Cornwallis, a campaign of alternate pursuit and retreat, which ended in the northward march of the latter into Virginia where he was to be safely shut up by Lafayette and Wayne in the trap at Yorktown, which was to prove the end of his American career and the end of the war. There he was soon confronted by the commander-in-chief of the American forces, for Washington seeing and seizing his great opportunity, while amusing Sir Henry Clinton with a pretended attack on New York, suddenly drew off his army and by rapid and forced marches appeared before Yorktown on September 30, 1781. Looking out there seaward from his entrenchments the British commander beheld the Count de Grasse and his fleet riding at anchor, and in the opposite direction the Continental Army, flanked by Lafayette's division on the one side, and Rochambeau's and De Grasse's Frenchmen on the other. A hundred heavy guns were brought

to bear upon the British works with such effect that all their walls and fortifications were soon beaten down and almost every gun dismounted. And so seeing no possible avenue of escape nothing was left for Cornwallis, brave and excellent soldier, and admirable gentleman that he was—but surrender. Five days after the fall of Yorktown, Sir Henry Clinton appeared in the offing with his fleet and seven thousand men, but too late fortunately for the succor he had intended to bring to his besieged comrade. He had nothing to do but to return to New York with chagrin and disppointment.

The capture of the entire British army at Yorktown was hailed with transports of joy from Massasachusetts to far-away Georgia, and Congress went in procession to Christ Church to offer up thanks to Almighty God for this great and decisive victory. On March 4, 1782, it was resolved by the House of Commons that those who should advise the King to continue the war on the continent of North America should be declared enemies of the sovereign and the country. That ended a war which had been originated and carried on from the beginning by the king and his tory majority in Parliament, without the sympathy and against the wishes of the great body of the English people. With the passage of this resolution offensive war mostly ceased on both sides, and on the 30th of

November of the same year preliminary articles of peace were signed at Paris by John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, John Jay and Henry Laurens, and by the British commissioner, Mr. Oswald. But it was not until the 3d of September of the following year that the definitive treaty of peace was signed between England, the United States, France, Spain and Holland, all of whom had been drawn into the war between Great Britain and the United States.

The army was disbanded on the 3d of November by a formal order of Congress. Then arose a great and threatening crisis, which was only averted by the firmness and prudence of Washington, reinforced by the strong affection with which he was regarded by the army. Little is it to be wondered at that men who had made the sacrifices and endured the hardships which the soldiers of that brave and suffering army had endured, with their pay in arrears for years, and now about to be disbanded and sent home in beggary to their families as a reward for the great service which they had rendered to their country, should have protested with more than ordinary emphasis, and with a seriousness amounting to a menace to the public safety, against the cruel and ungrateful treatment at the hands of a Congress, the impotent agent of a confederacy which, while affecting an attitude of governmental sovereignity, possessed none; whose powers of

legislation were limited to mere recommendations, which had a power to borrow money, but no power to levy a tax or impose a duty to repay it, a power to declare war, but no power to draft a soldier or to raise a revenue to carry it on, a power to make treaties but no power to prevent their violation. The articles of 1777 were in short in all respects, as they purported on their face to be, a mere "league of friendship" between independent states, a political body without bones or sinews, the powerless and impotent *umbra* of a real government.

But let us not forget Washington's indignant reply when it was proposed to him by Colonel Nicola—himself an army officer of good repute—to put an end to this imbecile pretence of a Confederate government by ignoring it and seizing himself the absolute control of public affairs. "Be assured," he wrote in reply, "that no occurrence in the course of the war has given me more painful sensations. I am at a loss to conceive what part of my public career could have have given encouragement to such an address. If I am not deceived in the knowledge of myself you could not have found a person to whom your schemes were more disagreeable. Let me conjure you, if you have any regard for your country, any concern for yourself, or any respect for me, to banish these thoughts from your mind, and

never to communicate, as from yourself or any one else, a sentiment of the like nature."

From Lexington to Yorktown in six and a half years. During that period he had seen the home upon the Potomac, to which he was so much attached, but once. When, two years later, after that pathetic leave-taking of his officers at Fraunces' tavern in New York, and his companions in arms had followed him in silence to Whitehall ferry, on his way to Anapolis to surrender his commission, and all the toils and anxieties of the war were over, and he stood, at last, once more on Christmas eve of 1783, upon the hillside at Mount Vernon, what mingled emotions must have struggled in the breast of this great captain then. He had left that delightful abode, about which clustered the memories of so many happy days, to live in forts, in camps, in farm-house headquarters, in unsheltered bivouacs, in huts, in trenches, in long marches, ending sometimes in the smoke of battle and the fierce struggle for victory. He had returned victorious and beloved as no other man in American history was ever beloved before, to find the face of nature unchanged indeed at beautiful Mount Vernon, but all else much altered; the gardens still trim, the kennels of fox hounds even, kept up, as usual, but the old friends, with whom he used to follow them, all absent. The Fairfaxes beyond the seas;

Belvoir, their charming abode, where he was always as much at home as in his own house, a heap of ashes; Greenway Court in ruins, and its gentle owner, Lord Fairfax, the best benefactor of his youth next to his brother Lawrence, also gone home to old England; old friends dead or removed, and those who remained, like George Mason, one of the closest of them, absorbed in other and different pursuits. He would have fain been again a Virginia farmer and great planter, but it was too late. He now belonged to the nation. His house was daily filled with magnates, Governors of States, congressmen, diplomatists, soldiers, travellers, intruders, curiosity hunters; his time consumed with political consultations and correspondence, and the organization of improvement and canal companies, one of which, the Potomac Company, of which he was president, having for its object the uniting of the waters of the Potomac with those of the Ohio, by a curious chain of circumstances, broadened eventually into a plan for the promotion of uniformity in the regulation of commerce and the increase of trade, a plan to be discussed at Annapolis by commissioners of Maryland and Virginia, with the addition afterwards of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and New York. And so it came about that out of this Annapolis convention for the improvement of trade and navigation grew, at length, the convention to

frame a Constitution for the United States, beneath which all the States were eventually to find shelter, security and strength. Did ever so great a tree grow from so small a seed? From such comparatively obscure beginnings came the convention of 1787, with Washington for its presiding officer, and so, after four months of deliberation, the Constitution of the United States, signed on the 17th of September, 1787, to which the first signature affixed was that of "George Washington, President, and deputy from Virginia," an instrument which is declared in its sixth article to be the "supreme law of the land, and the judges in every State shall be bound thereby, anything in the Constitution or laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding."

With this event and his unanimous election to the Presidency, the curtain lifts again upon the last official act in the drama of General Washington's public life. It seems truly as if Divine Providence had from the first decreed to link his name with every important era in the growth and progress of the Nation's history from its birth to its coming of age. Having trained him for it in the rough school of danger, hardship and endurance which characterized his early life, it made him, when the signal for war sounded, the chief captain of its army of liberation. When that great object was accomplished it put him next

upon the trail which was to lead to the first suggestion for a real constitution. It made him next one of the chief builders of that constitution. It then placed in his hand the helm of this new ship of state then freshly launched upon its first experimental voyage over untraversed seas. With what firmness and fortitude and dignity, and patriotism, and discriminating wisdom he filled that high office then for the first time occupied, is recorded in the history of the ensuing eight years. How wisely he chose his official advisors, with what adroit tact and affability he reconciled their differences, with what steadiness he held upon his course in spite of party clamor, suspicions and revilings; with what singleness of purpose he pursued the policy which saved the country from the shoals and quicksands which beset it in the very outset of its existence, with what patience he encountered all opposition, with what energy he repressed all disorders, and beat down all attacks upon the constitution and the laws, these are things familiar not only to the student of history but to every one who has read with the least attention the annals of his country.

Consider for a moment the magnitude of the task of putting in motion for the first time the complicated machinery of such a government, the perils which surrounded the working of a new constitution, which, as Burke said of the British

Constitution at a critical period, "stood on a nice equipoise with steep precipices and deep waters upon all sides of it," the numerous departments to be organized, the difficult questions to be solved, the obstacles to be overcome, the differences to be conciliated, the domestic policies to be adjusted, the foreign policies to be reconciled. When the French demagogue Genet appealed over his head from his decision to the people, he throttled the meddlesome envoy as Hercules throttled the serpent sent by Juno for his destruction. Of the message sent by him to Congress upon that occasion, relating to the inflammatory and impertinent proceedings of the envoy, John Adams wrote "the President has given Genet a bolt of thunder!" When Jay's treaty was assaulted by an insane clamor raised against it by the democratic party, which, to use the President's own figure of speech, resembled more the cry raised against a mad dog than any rational argument, he maintained it and carried it triumphantly through the Senate, despite the abuse of partizan journals and noisy politicians. He displayed on every occasion the same intrepid spirit and the same undaunted attitude. He crushed the whisky tax insurrection in Pennsylvania by the mere display of his authority, and his determined declaration that it should be put down, and that to put it down, he would use the whole power of the government·

When war broke out again between France and England in 1793, he wrote to Jefferson, his Secretary of State, whom he well knew to be a French sympathizer, "it behooves the government of this country to use every means in its power to prevent the citizens thereof from embroiling us with either of those powers, by endeavoring to maintain a strict neutrality. I therefore require that you will give the subject mature consideration ; that such measures as shall be most likely to effect this desirable purpose may be adopted without delay. You will also think of such other measures as it may be necessary for us to pursue against events which it may not be in our power to avoid or control, and lay them before me at my arrival in Philadelphia, for which place I shall set out to-morrow." We cannot, even at this distance of time, read without a blush of shame the political attacks which were then made upon this great man by his political enemies in the last years of his administration of public affairs. We read almost with incredulity of the affront which was offered to him in the closing scene of his public career. Congress convened on the 5th day of December. It was the session which succeeded the publication of the immortal Farewell Address. On the 7th, Washington met Congress for the last time. In his speech he recommended the establishment of an institution for the improvement of agriculture,

a military academy, an increase of the navy and a National University, concluding with these noble words, "The situation in which I now stand for the last time in the midst of the representatives of the people of the United States, naturally recalls the period when the administration of the present form of government commenced, and I cannot omit the occasion to congratulate you and my country on the success of the experiment, nor to repeat my fervent supplications to the Supreme Ruler of the Universe and Sovereign Arbiter of Nations that His providential care may be still extended to the United States, that the virtue and happiness of the people may be preserved and that the government which they have instituted for the protection of their liberties may be perpetual." To this address the Senate made a fitting reply, declaring that they would be deficient in gratitude and justice did they not attribute a great portion of the blessings which the country enjoyed to the virtue, firmness and talents with which he had administered the government, virtues conspicuously displayed in the most trying times and on the most critical occasions, and assuring him that their warmest affections and anxious regards would accompany him in his approaching retirement. The reply of the House was in the same strain, expressive of the gratitude and admiration inspired by the virtues and services of the President, by his wis-

dom, firmness, moderation and magnanimity. "May your own virtue and a nation's prayers," they said, "obtain the happiest sunshine for the decline of your days, and the choicest of future blessings. For our country's sake and for the sake of republican liberty, it is our earnest wish that your example may be the guide of your successor, and thus, after being the ornament and safeguard of the present age, become the patrimony of our descendants."

But there was a discordant note. Mr. Giles rose to object. Mr. Giles, I regret to say, was a Democratic representative from Virginia. He moved to strike out so much of the reply of the House to the President's address as eulogized his administration and expressed the regret of the House at his retirement from office. Though the voice of all America should proclaim the President's retiring as a calamity, he could not join in it, because he did not conceive it to be a misfortune. He hoped the President would be happy in his retirement, but he hoped he would retire. His motion was defeated by an overwhelming majority, but he found eleven members of his own political stripe to vote with him. Among them Andrew Jackson, then a young man, twenty nine years of age, as yet unknown to fame, recently elected a delegate from the newly admitted State of Tennessee. (Annals of Congress—Second

Session of Fourth Congress, A. D. 1796—page 1668.)

On the next day the House, in a body, attended by the Speaker, proceeded to the President's house, on Market street east of Sixth street, where the Speaker read to him the reply of the House, to which the President replied, "To a citizen whose views were unambitious, who preferred the shade and tranquillity of private life to the splendor and solicitude of elevated station, and whom the voice of duty and his country could alone have drawn from his chosen retreat, no reward for his public services can be so grateful as public approbation accompanied by a consciousness that to render those services useful to that country has been his single aim, and when this approbation is expressed by the representatives of a free and enlightened nation, the reward will admit of no addition. Receive, gentlemen, my sincere and affectionate thanks for this signal testimony that my services have been acceptable and useful to my country." They were services, let it also not be forgotten for which, while they extended over a period of more than seventeen years, he had always refused to receive any pecuniary compensation whatever.

The days of his public life were now running rapidly to a close. On February 8, 1797, the votes for President being counted in the presence of the

Houses of Congress, then assembled at the south-west corner of Sixth and Chestnut streets, the result was announced by the Vice-President, who, having sat down for a few moments, then arose again and said: "In obedience to the Constitution and Laws of the United States I declare John Adams elected President of the United States." An announcement which, although the record does not say so, must have induced a smile, for the gentleman who, in pursuance of the Constitution, made the announcement was the gentleman who was himself elected. (Annals of Congress, A. D. 1797. 4th Cong. 2d session, p. 2096.) An incident not likely, it would seem, soon to occur again in our history, our experience appearing to demonstrate that, in modern times, no citizen of the United States is further removed from the Presidential office than the Vice-President, unless, indeed, he should reach it, as has sometimes happened, by the act of God.

On the day before his retirement General Washington wrote to his old friend and comrade in arms, General Knox a letter, in which he plaintively said: "To the wearied traveller who sees a resting place, and is bending his body to lean thereon, I now compare myself; but to be suffered to do this in peace is too much to be endured by some. To misrepresent my motives, to reprobate my politics, and to weaken the confidence which has been

reposed in my administration, are objects which cannot be relinquished by those who will be satisfied with nothing short of a change in our political system. The approving voice of my country, however, expressed by its representatives, deprives their sting of its poison, and places in the same point of view both the weakness and the malignity of their efforts." On the same day he gave a farewell dinner to the foreign Ministers, to which also were invited Mr. Adams, the incoming President, and his wife, Mr. Jefferson, the new Vice-President and many distinguished guests. During the dinner, says Bishop White, who was himself a guest, much hilarity prevailed. When the cloth was removed, Washington filled his glass. "Ladies and gentlemen," said he, "this is the last time I shall drink your health as a public man. I do it with sincerity, wishing you all possible happiness." "The gaiety of the company," he continues, "was instantly exchanged for a profound and sorrowful silence, for all felt the solemnity of the occasion, and many were in tears." On the next day he attended the inauguration of his successor, Mr. Adams. An immense crowd had gathered about Sixth and Chestnut streets, from which arose enthusiastic cheers and acclamations as he entered the building. Mr. Adams, in his inaugural address, spoke of him as "one who by a long course of great actions, regulated by pru-

dence, justice, temperance and fortitude, had merited the gratitude of his fellow citizens, commanded the highest praises of foreign nations, and secured immortal glory with posterity." At the close of the proceedings, says one who was a spectator of the scene, William A. Duer, formerly President of Columbia College, "As Washington moved toward the door to retire, there was a rush from the gallery to the corridor that threatened the loss of life or limb, so eager were the throng to catch a last look of one who had so long been the object of public veneration. When Washington was in the street he waved his hat in return for the cheers of the multitude, his countenance radiant with benignity, his gray hair streaming in the wind. The great crowd followed him to his own door, where, turning around, his countenance assumed a grave and almost melancholy expression, his eyes full of tears, his emotion too great for utterance, and only by gestures could he indicate his thanks. In the evening a splendid banquet was given to him by the chief citizens of Philadelphia in the Amphitheatre—a building which stood at the northwest corner of Fifth and Prune streets, known as Lailson's Amphitheatre and Concert Room.

The banquet was attended by the heads of departments, foreign ministers, officers of the army, and great numbers of distinquished people.

Among the pictures which decorated the scene was one of Mount Vernon—Mount Vernon—the abode of his youth—the home of so many fond associations—the sweet and quiet anchorage to which he was now to come again at last, like Aeneas into Latium,—*ad sedes ubi fata quietas ostendunt.*

Arrived there he writes to his friend Oliver Wolcott, his Secretary of the Treasury, "To make a little flour annually, to repair houses going fast to ruin, to build one for the security of my papers, to amuse myself in agricultural and rural pursuits, will constitute employment for the few years I have yet to remain on this terrestrial globe." There, where his young life began and where his manhood grew to its robust prime, amid his ample fields, and his far stretching woods then touched with the first breath of spring, let us leave him to his repose and his glory. When not quite three years later, on the 14th of December, 1799, he passed away at the age of sixty-eight, the announcement sent a thrill of genuine sorrow from one end of the country to the other. The whole nation went into mourning for him. They buried him there in the home he had loved so well, and, as a great soldier should be buried—amid the resounding roar of cannon and the booming of minute guns from a sloop in the river.

If the events of which I have spoken, and the

scenes upon which I have dwelt, are old and trite they are, nevertheless, by every American to be regarded as forever honorable and forever fresh. If anything which has been said has, by recalling or by exhibiting in new colors any half forgotten or striking event, added anything to the interest or pleasure of the present occasion, I can truly say with Montaigne, "I have made only a nosegay of gathered flowers, and have brought nothing of my own but the string which ties them."

A hundred years have gone by since what Washington called our experiment in government began. In the history of states and of nations it is but a brief period, yet it has been long enough to soften the asperities, and to break down and obliterate the unfriendly feelings which grew naturally out of the War of Independence toward our mother land, whose historic glory, whose letters, whose arts, whose civilization, whose love of law and liberty, nay, whose very blood are a part of our inheritance, despite the carpings and cavillings of a few unhappy and solitary spirits who would separate us from her, and who, if they were entitled to do so, could feel no pride in being the countrymen of those whose names are written in that roll of illustrious men which belongs to the race from which Washington was sprung. With that great people beyond the sea—our kinsmen and our brothers—we shall,

let us hope, be always found in the future not only at peace, but allied with, and abreast with them, leading the civilization and humanity of the world. This I believe to be the aspiration and the hope of a vast majority of the people of this nation. And, therefore, they have hailed with a common satisfaction and acclaim, as a beneficent omen in our affairs, the recent treaty which proposes to submit to impartial arbitration whatever differences shall arise between us. Such an event, if carried to its final consummation, will at any rate, fill with encouragement a future, which, on many accounts, seems often dark and uncertain before us. Whatever that future may be—whether to advance or to retrograde, to rise to greater heights of national greatness, prosperity and happiness, or to founder after all our efforts in some fierce political storm—to go down in some wild and fatal Euroclydon of popular frenzy and ignorance—we cannot escape the responsibilities which have been transmitted to us by former generations. The man who at this time sets himself to the ignoble work of raking among the ashes of a fire extinguished for a hundred years, in search of sparks wherewith to kindle the animosities of kindred nations, is engaged in a business which the public conscience of this country will not approve. God forbid that our country should, by prejudice, or passion, or any jugglery

of words, be disappointed in the just expectations arising out of so great an opportunity as that which is now presented, to enroll itself with all its fast growing strength, and power, and influence on the side of perpetual peace, and to write, as it were, upon the skies a legend to be read, not only by the people who dwell between the two great oceans of the world, and within the four seas of Britain, but by all the great states of Europe as well, that so perchance at length it may happen, in the good providence of God, that the example of these two great nations, communicated to and followed by others, may, when the last hours of another century shall ring upon the horologe of time, make sober verity the prophecy of the poet who wrote the Occultation of Orion:

Then through the silence overhead,
An angel with a trumpet said,
"Forevermore, forevermore,
The reign of violence is o'er!"
And like an instrument that flings
Its music on another's strings,
The trumpet of the angel cast
Upon the heavenly lyre it's blast,
And on, from sphere to sphere, the words
Re-echoed down the burning chords—
"Forevermore, forevermore,
The reign of violence is o'er!"

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